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THEY'RE SCARCE!



M I S S O U R I

1944

GREATER NEEDS

FOR

USED

CONTAINERS

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OFFICE OF DISTRIBUTION
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-1944-GREATER NEEDS FOR
USED CONTAINERS

STOCK PILING
SHIPPERS, WHOLESALERS, AND PRODUCERS

In keeping with the war program every effort should be made to assist in the salvage and re-use of vitally needed containers. All indications point to a greater scarcity of containers for 1944 in shipping and transporting of fresh fruits and vegetables. You are being called upon to extend every effort to assist in this needed war tool.

Present available supplies of used containers among the salvage suppliers are being depleted very rapidly in view of the anticipated increase in volume of fresh fruit and vegetable crops for 1944. This calls for more rigid cooperation and determination between producers and shippers in order that they succeed in their marketing problems during harvest season.

Many localities have relieved the container situation to a great extent by an organized unit between growers, shippers, and dealers, in the setting up of an exchange and reconditioning program.

OUTLOOK FOR NEW CONTAINERS IN 1944

I. Today's wartime container situation is characterized by shortages of materials and manpower. Containers used for shipping and marketing fresh fruits and vegetables are made of wood, wire, fibreboard, paper, and various textiles, all of which come out of stocks that are not adequate for both military and civilian needs.

Rising costs, labor scarcity, and other difficulties have restricted the quantities of raw materials produced. In lumbering operations, for example, these causes have reduced the quantity of logs and bolts from which lumber and veneer are obtained. Diversions to military requirements and restrictions imposed by government orders have prohibited manufacture of the customary volume of fruit and vegetable packages. Alternative profit opportunities have encouraged shifting of some manufacturing facilities to other products, such as ship timbers or shipping cases for war goods. Some manufacturers have closed down completely or sharply reduced fruit and vegetable package construction.

Thus, four major factors are affecting the supply of new containers (1) scarcity of materials, (2) shortage of labor, (3) increased requirements for other purposes, and (4) opportunities of manufacturers to increase their net returns by making other products.

A deficit of new containers for civilian use appears to be inevitable until military and Lend-Lease demands are relaxed. Some shifts will be needed from rigid to non-rigid containers and the supply of new packages will have to be supplemented by greatly increased salvage and re-use.

War Food Administration and War Production Board in October, 1943

reported the 1944 outlook for fruit and vegetable containers to be as follows:

WOOD CONTAINERS

Owing to war programs, consumption of lumbers has outrun production the past two years. This deficit has been made up by inroads into dwindling inventories and by imports. At the present time, however, reserves are at such a low point and so unevenly distributed that they cannot be relied upon to fill the gap between needs and production. The supply situation for container veneer is similar to that for lumber. Current production is estimated to be running short of needs by about 20 percent.

The overall situation on lumber is described as extremely critical. The estimated usage of lumber during 1942 exceeded production by approximately 6 billion board feet. Best available estimates on usage in 1943 are approximately 2-1/2 billion board feet above production. Estimates of 1944 requirements are approximately 3 billion board feet below the 1943 figure, but production will show further declines, and it is doubtful if the supply will be in balance with demand unless every possible restriction on usage for non-essential purposes is made.

FIBREBOARD

It is not likely that more fibreboard packages will be available for agricultural products in 1944 than was the case in 1943. In fact, the supply may be reduced.

Inventories of cordwood and paper stock are approaching dangerously low levels. Paper mill and pulp manufacturing facilities in operation are adequate for both military and civilian requirements, and there is also ample capacity in the box factories to produce these containers, but the supply of raw materials to producing mills remains a bottleneck. This is due primarily to the shortage of cordwood from which most fibreboard or paper cartons are made. Receipts of pulpwood at mills during the first eight months of 1943 were 19 percent below receipts in the same period in 1942.

RAGS

The overall supply of textile and paper bagging materials is not sufficient to meet all requirements, but agricultural needs in 1944 probably can be met if the existing bag supply is carefully conserved.

BURLAP

Supplies of burlap have increased since mid-summer of 1943, and indications are for continued increases in imports. The improved supply position is dependent upon conditions in Calcutta, India, shipping facilities to this country, plus military requirements. Stocks of lightweight burlap are not sufficient to meet all needs, but 10 ounce burlap is available in enough volume to offset the lightweight deficit. Burlap bags remain scarce, reportedly due to a shortage of labor in the manufacturing plants.

COTTON

Production and manpower problems point to reduced supplies of cotton

bagging materials, but the increased burlap supply is expected to make up for this reduction.

OPEN MESH

Production is expected to be about 10 percent above that of the past 12 months. Because of increased demands, however, for packing citrus fruits, cabbage, corn, root crops, etc., not all requirements for this type of bag may be provided for.

POTENTIAL SUPPLY OF USED CONTAINERS

II. More extensive salvage of used containers appears to be the only way to insure that crops can be delivered to market for the remainder of the war.

Various kinds of packages are arriving in quantities in markets constantly, containing fruits and vegetables from other producing districts. Opportunity is thus afforded the alert and resourceful to lay in a supply of good used packages to supplement whatever new packages he can get.

Responsibility for stock-piling used containers and conserving these needed materials rests rightfully on the producers and shipper. Regular salvage channels can be counted upon to assemble the necessary quantities if shippers and growers will help to expedite the operation by storing and re-conditioning of available supplies.

Dealers have only limited storage facilities. When warehouses are filled, salvage operations have to stop. Producers and shippers must assist in the handling.

In response to an active demand many of these packages are being salvaged and returned to distant shipping points. Producers have to compete with growers and shippers in western and southern States for this potential supply of containers. Possibilities of obtaining desired stocks of used containers will be greater if procurement is undertaken early instead of being delayed until harvest time approaches.

Unfortunately many thousands of good, serviceable used packages are still being destroyed by emptiers, despite all efforts to publicize the need for conservation and to stimulate organized, large-scale salvage operations. In cities and towns where commercial salvage is not well organized or active, containers continue to be damaged and destroyed in the habitual fashion, or relatively few if any find their way back into channels of trade from such sources. Opportunities for greatly improved conservation of fruit and vegetable containers are apparent in many hotels, restaurants, hospitals, public institutions, industrial plant cafeterias, and independent retail food stores. This is true even in some large cities.

Some return of used packages has been achieved by growers and distributors by charging a deposit or offering to buy back empty containers from customers. The manager of one large fruit farm reports that in 1942, by offering 5 cents each for returned bushel baskets, he induced his customers to return 14,358 baskets that served his needs fully as well as new baskets which

would have cost at that time about 20 cents each. Presumably he was equally successful in 1943, though he doubtless had to pay higher prices.

A vegetable growers' association that operates a wholesale and jobbing service in one of the larger cities maintains a standing offer to buy at its warehouse from local dealers and assemblers all serviceable containers of the types its members can use, and on some types of packages charges its customers a deposit which is then credited to the customer's account when the packages are returned in serviceable condition. This organization has thus succeeded in recovering thousands of packages which otherwise probably would have been destroyed, and has saved its members part of the cost of new packages.

With respect to wooden containers, War Food Administration has pointed out 1/ that "fruit and vegetable growers in the far West and South are, and will be, almost wholly dependent on new container production, but those located in or adjacent to the large consuming centers in the Northeast need not be. As a matter of fact, fruit and vegetable growers in that section can largely underwrite their package requirements by judicious stock-piling of used containers which will be plentiful during the winter and spring months."

Urgency of this problem was stressed in the following telegram from Mr. L. C. Carey, Fresh Marketing Division, Fruit and Vegetable Branch, Food Distribution Administration, Washington, D. C., dated December 23, 1943:

"ASSUMING 1944 TREE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION WILL APPROXIMATE 1942, PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES INDICATE 1944 CONTAINER REQUIREMENTS WILL EXCEED 1943 AS FOLLOWS: APPROXIMATELY MILLION MORE HALF-BUSHEL ROUND STAVE BASKETS, 17 MILLION MORE BUSHELS, 2-1/2 MILLION MORE HAMPERS, 17-1/2 MILLION MORE DECIDUOUS FRUIT BOXES, 6-3/4 MILLION MORE CRATES. WE CAN'T SEE NEW PRODUCTION APPROACHING THESE FIGURES. DON'T BELIEVE GROWERS, PARTICULARLY NORTHERN AND EASTERN GROWERS, CAN AFFORD BE COMPLACENT AND IGNORE GENEROUS SUPPLIES SERVICEABLE USED CONTAINERS NOW AVAILABLE NORTHERN MARKETS, WHICH IF NOT ABSORBED PROMPTLY USED DEALERS LIKELY DISCONTINUE COLLECTING."

Container Notes No. 5, September 16, 1943

Some have had the opinion that growers are not allowed under existing government regulations to stock containers more than 60 days in advance of use. This assumption is unfounded. Priorities regulations have been officially interpreted to mean that they do not prevent a person engaged in a seasonal occupation from accepting delivery in anticipation of his seasonal needs, provided (a) that he is not guilty of hoarding and (b) that the deliveries accepted are not greater or not further in advance than are needed to meet his anticipated requirements.

MEASURES TO FACILITATE CONSERVATION AND RE-USE OF CONTAINERS

III. Various means were employed during 1943 to promote wider recognition and understanding of existing and anticipated problems in connection with package supply, to encourage an intelligent, patriotic and vigorous attack upon these problems, and to give direction to the emergency container program. These measures include (1) Federal Government regulations designed to promote conservation of raw materials and finished containers, to prevent profiteering,

and to encourage re-use of packages, (2) purchase and resale of used containers by the War Food Administration to facilitate contact between remote buyers and sellers, (3) reduced freight rates on carlot shipments of empty used packages from northern to southeastern states, and (4) publicity designed to encourage voluntary participation.

Regulations of the War Production Board, War Food Administration and Office of Price Administration include several orders which directly affect the supply, prices and use of fruit and vegetable containers, and which impose restrictions of one sort or another on manufacturers, distributors, and users of boxes, crates, baskets, bags, etc. Among the more influential of the orders affecting growers are the following:

WPB order L-232, establishing standard sizes of wooden containers that may be used for fruits and vegetables and imposing certain restrictions as to usage.

WPB order L-317, prohibiting the use of corrugated or solid fibre shipping containers for certain vegetables.

WPB order M-208, conservation order affecting soft wood lumber.

WPB order M-221, conservation order affecting textile bags.

OPA order WPR-320, establishing maximum prices on wooden containers.

WPB order P-140, assigning preferential ratings to containers.

OPA order WPR-434, establishing maximum prices on used fruit and vegetable containers.

Copies of these regulations and subsequent additions and revisions may be obtained from your state or local WPB offices. Following is a brief digest of the existing provisions of each of the foregoing orders, including amendments to date, insofar as they relate to fruits and vegetables.

L-232, as amended October 25, 1943. Prohibits manufacture and assembly of any wooden shipping container not meeting approved specifications. Permitted are 68 styles and sizes of nailed boxes and crates; hampers, 1/2, 5/8, and 1 bu.; round stave baskets, 1/2 and 1 bu.; splint baskets, 3, 12, 16, 24, and 32 qt.; climax baskets, 4 and 12 qt.; till baskets, 1, 2, 3, and 4 qt.; and berry cups, 1/2, 1 pt. and 1 qt. Only one outside surface of any of these containers may be labeled or branded. None may be stained or colored. No person may ship the following designated commodities in new wooden containers in a greater amount during any calendar or seasonal year than these stipulated percentages of the amounts he shipped in wooden containers in 1942 -- juice grapes, 50%; table grapes, 100-110%; carrots, 100%; cantaloupes and melons, cauliflower, celery and lettuce, 80%; cucumbers and radishes, 50%. Beginning January 1, 1944 use of new wooden containers is completely prohibited for cabbage, green corn, dry onions, white potatoes, rutabagas and root turnips.

L-317, issued and effective October 11, 1943. Prohibits use of new fibre shipping containers for packing cucumbers, green corn, onions, white potatoes rutabagas, and turnips.

M-208, as amended September 16, 1943. To conserve softwood lumber, this order assigns preference ratings to many commodities governing deliveries of lumber for boxing, crating, packing and stowing for shipment. Fresh,

canned and dried fruits and vegetables are assigned ratings AA-3, and AA-4, thus limiting the types and quantities of lumber that may be used for these products.

M-261, as amended August 2, 1943. To conserve metal, restrictions are placed on the use of strapping wires and bands. If strapping is essential to safe delivery of the contents and has customarily been used for the same type of shipment and container, it is permitted on wooden or fibre containers containing fruits or vegetables.

P-140, as amended July 14, 1943. To facilitate acquisition of wooden and fibre shipping containers for essential purposes, preference ratings are assigned to many commodities. Rating AA-3 is assigned to canned foods, dried apples, apricots and peaches, and fresh apples, apricots, bananas, cherries, citrus, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, and prunes (fresh), berries, beans (snap and lima), carrots, peas, and tomatoes. Other dried, frozen and preserved foods and other fresh fruits and vegetables are assigned ratings AA-4 and AA-5.

MPR-320, as amended September 28, 1943. This order establishes maximum prices for more than 200 varieties and sizes of containers, made of wood or of a combination of wood and solid fibre or corrugated board, and produced in the southern, eastern and central states for packing perishable fruits and vegetables. Prices for western wooden agricultural containers are covered by RMPR-186. Maximum prices are f.o.b. mill prices, based on producing zones, with allowable additions for various types of sales and deliveries in accordance with accepted trade practice.

MPR-434, issued July 20, 1943 and effective July 26, 1943. Establishes a schedule of maximum prices for all used wood, fibre or corrugated board fruit and vegetable containers designed to encourage their collection and re-conditioning for re-use. Though allowable maximum prices are higher than those previously permitted under the General Maximum Price Regulation, in no case are they more than 80 percent of the maximum prices for new containers. Prices are established at three levels of distribution: the emptier, accumulator and dealer levels. They do not apply to sales of used containers by farmers' cooperatives. A license is required of each seller.

IV. A working knowledge of the containers most likely to be in demand, particularly for shipment to other areas, would also be desirable. Among these are:

	Inside Dimensions
1-3/5 bu. wirebound (Bruce) citrus crate	12 x 12 x 24 inches
Approx: 1-1/2 bu. wirebound (Howard) celery crate	10 x 16 x 22 inches (Fla.)
Approx. 1-1/2 bu. wirebound (Howard) celery crate	9-3/4 x 16 x 20 inches (Calif.)
Approx. 2-3/8 bu. nailed L. A. (lettuce) crate	13 x 17-1/2 x 22 inches
Approx. 1-1/2 bu. nailed cauliflower crate	8-1/2 x 18 x 22 inches
Tomato lug box	5-3/4 x 13-1/2 x 16 inches
Tub bushel basket - solid or built-up bottom	
Tub bushel basket - continuous stave, 3 hoop	
Bushel hampers	

Offers of Tub baskets and hampers should indicate clearly whether covers are

included.

Reduced freight rates on used containers. Reduced rates on used fruit and vegetable containers from originating points in northern states to destinations in southern states became effective September 27, 1943. The new scale of rates is 23 1/2 percent of First Class, and applies from all stations in Official Classification Territory to all points in Southern Freight Association Territory.

The item as published in the respective tariffs reads:

"Used fruit and vegetable containers, set up, nested, or knocked down, or folded, or loaded flat, in straight or mixed carloads (baskets and hampers; wire bound crates, or nailed crates, or boxes; barrels, half barrels, and till boxes), minimum weight 25,000 pounds when in boxcars and 15,000 pounds when in refrigerator cars when the latter are furnished for carrier's convenience. - C.L. - Rate Column 23 1/2."

These preferential rates were never before available on this type of traffic. Owing to the emergency scarcity of containers the new rates were published on short notice rather than after the statutory period of 30 days. Expiration date is fixed at six months after the end of the war. The northern originating area covered in the rate reduction includes Illinois and the states east of that state and of Lake Michigan. The southeastern area of destination is bounded on the west and north by the Mississippi, Ohio, and Potomac Rivers.

Other special rates recently authorized are:

- (a) From Chicago and Mississippi River to Pacific Coast Territory \$1.50 per cwt. in refrigerator cars, 6000 pounds minimum.
- (b) From points east of Chicago and the Mississippi River to Pacific Coast Territory, \$2.00 per cwt. in refrigerator cars, 6000 pounds minimum.

While local demand seems to have been lagging, Office of Distribution reports an unprecedented movement, particularly to the west, from middle west and northeastern states.

Other WFA releases: Printed and mimeographed circulars were published from time to time by the Washington and regional offices of War Food Administration, emphasizing critical aspects of the container situation and urging conservation. Refabrication of certain types of packages were described. Suggestions were made for posters and other devices to stimulate local interest in salvage. Posters in color were distributed to growers and grower organizations, farmers' markets and wholesale dealers, and a suggested design for stickers to be supplied to shippers for application to each container was widely circulated.

SUGGESTED USES OF AVAILABLE NAILED TYPE CONTAINERS

V. L.A. (Lettuce) crate:

Inside dimensions:

13 X 17-1/2 X 21-1/2
inches.

Bunched beets - 4 dozen; radishes,
10 dozen

Bunched carrots 5 dozen; onions,
8 dozen

Bunched parsley 10 doz.; turnips,
3 dozen

Celery, cabbage, cauliflower; egg-
plant - 3-4 dozen.

Head lettuce 3-4 doz; cantaloups;
cabbage

Half L.A. crate:

9 X 13 X 21-1/2

Same products as above.

Small vegetable crate:

8 X 12 X 22 inches

Many of the above products, particu-
larly bunched vegetables.

Lug Box:

5-3/4 X 13-1/2 X 16

Approximately 18-1/2
quarts, level full.

Celery hearts; celery cabbage;
cucumbers; green corn; leaf lettuce
(6 lbs); parsnips (20 lbs); green
onions, loose; 10-15 dozen; peppers;
tomatoes; topped beets, carrots,
turnips; summer squash, apples, peaches,
cherries, grapes.

Nailed Orange Box:

11-1/2 X 11-1/2 X 24

Approx. 1-1/2 bushels

or

12 X 12 X 24

Approx. 1-3/5 bushels.

Asparagus; green corn; head lettuce;
peppers; spinach; topped beets, carrots,
turnips; cabbage; apples, peaches,
pears, quinces.

N.W. Apple Box:

10-1/2 X 11-1/2 X 18

Approx. 1 bushel

Same products as above.

USED CONTAINERS FOR SPECIFIC PRODUCTS

ASPARAGUS:

The western style crate, approximately 10 inches
deep; 9 to 9-1/2 wide at top; 11 inches wide at
bottom; 18 inches long, will begin to arrive in
eastern markets about March 20 and will continue
until about June 15. These crates should be
suitable for asparagus grown in Delaware, Maryland,
New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Illinois,
Michigan, all of which are close to sources of supply.

CANTALOUPE:

Standard and jumbo sizes of crates and flats will begin to arrive from the West around May 15 and continue for several weeks.

Growers in South and North Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and elsewhere please note, and advise your used container dealer that you will be in the market for such crates.

CAULIFLOWER:

Western shipments in crates approximately 8-1/2 x 18 x 22 inches, is now arriving from the West. These could and should be bought and stock-piled for future use in New England, New York, New Jersey, and other producing areas.

BERRY CRATES:

24 quart size. Some quantities available at this time, but may be picked up for other uses unless procured at once.

PAPER SACKS FOR APPLES

Professor C. E. Baker, Purdue University, advises that last year more than ever before apples were sold in paper sacks at road side stands and for local market. In many instances buyers prefer sacks because they are easy to handle in and out of automobiles. The use of sacks was further encouraged by placing a rather stiff premium on apples in baskets.

This idea may be well worth investigation. Used container dealers can frequently furnish new sacks, misprinted, or for some other reason unsuited for the original purpose, or used sacks which are suitable for apples.

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

1. Growers Associations, Wholesale and Retail Trade Associations, Chain Stores, Restaurant and Hotel Associations, Hospitals, City and State Institutions:-
 - A. Publicity
 - B. News Releases
 - C. Bulletins (Weekly)
 - D. Committee Meetings
 - E. Poster Display Program
2. Cooperation in Food Field of Supply:-

Contact and Cooperate with:

 - A. State Extension Services
 - B. University Bulletins
 - C. Bureau of Markets
 - D. Trade Association
 - E. Market Managers
 - F. A.A.A.

3. Produce Houses and Shippers:-

- A. Good Handling
- B. Salvage and Repair Dept.
- C. Encourage Truckers to Back Haul Empties.
- D. Display Posters
- E. Gummed Stickers Cautioning Care in Opening and Encouraging Return.

4. Farmers:-

- A. Anticipate Your Needs in Advance to Harvest Season
- B. Early stock-piling
- C. Repair
- D. Pick-up Service
- E. Exchange
- F. Sound Field Practices Conserving Containers.
- G. Re-vamp Other Types of Containers for Own Needs.

5. Truckers:-

- A. Back Haul of Empties.
- B. Poster Display on Truck Panels.
- C. Careful Handling
- D. Encourage Poster Display at Points of Delivery.